

I firmly believe that an insulin injecting diabetic (or any diabetic, for that matter) can learn to accurately predict his or her blood sugar trend several hours in advance, and manage it accordingly. Certainly, this can't be done by a few hours' perusal of handouts found in a doctor's waiting room. I'm talking about spending the time, effort, and occasionally money to learn how the body produces and uses insulin, sugar and adrenaline, and the effects of physical activity and stress. More importantly, each diabetic can learn how these things affect him or her personally. This also involves long-term logging and review of time and level of blood sugar testing, time and content of meals, and time and level of physical workouts.

I was diagnosed as having diabetes in 1984, and almost immediately had to begin injecting insulin to maintain good blood sugars. During 1984 and 1985, I can recall three or four unanticipated episodes of hypoglycemia. While the first of those was very much a surprise, I became aware of each subsequent "attack" farther and farther in advance. Each episode was the result of an unusually small meal, followed by a period of greater than usual physical activity. Having learned how to anticipate my needs before they occur, I can say this has not been a problem since. In other words, there was a learning curve, which took perhaps a year to fully master.

There is widespread belief (even among diabetics who have been unable or unwilling to learn how to manage their condition) that diabetics are prone to unanticipated and sometimes severe bouts of hypoglycemia. I'm confident that if you discuss this with any physician who regularly and successfully treats diabetics, you will hear that this simply does not have to be the case. Any diabetic who has the desire and mental faculties to do so can learn to manage his or her condition so as to be at least as safe, reliable, and healthy, as most any non-diabetic.

With regard to commercial driving, I fail to see that a person who must periodically inject insulin for health reasons is per se incapable of being trusted to drive a vehicle. The FAA seems to have discovered otherwise, and this is under conditions where, unlike being on the highway, one can't simply pull over and wait until one's sugar is OK. A pilot must demonstrate that he or she not only is capable of managing blood sugar, but in fact does just that at all times while at the controls of an airplane.

I propose a waiver program requiring: a) an ITDM driver must have been injecting insulin for at least a year, or learned self-treatment during an intensive in-hospital education program; b) twice annually, the driver produce statements from both an endocrinologist and an ophthalmologist stating that there is no neuropathy, retinopathy, or any other diabetic-related condition which adversely affects the person's ability to operate the rigs for which he or she is permitted; and c) the driver regularly (perhaps bimonthly or quarterly) submit a log, showing times of meals, times and results of blood sugar level checks (minimum of four times daily); this log could perhaps contain a printout from a computer-friendly glucose meter which retains test history.

Having recently been "downsized" out of a 40-year career, I desire strongly to become a commercial driver (nearly half my consulting career has been involved with trucking and transportation). I have no aversion whatever to submitting detailed reports to both state and federal agencies enabling them to evaluate my fitness to be behind the wheel. Further, I wouldn't complain if I had to pay a fee to cover the cost of processing such reports. I do know that at ANY time, I'm less of a threat to myself and others than the "safe" P. A. M. driver who forced me off the highway last week, or the "safe" SMT driver I saw force one

driver out of her lane and another all the way into the median a month ago, or the half dozen or so gravel trucks I've seen this year "safely" driving after dark (like 2200 and 2300) between cities without their lights on. I'm well aware that these morons don't represent even a sizable minority of the commercial drivers on the roads, but I think a reasonable person can understand my point.